

Remarks

Claims 1 - 35 are pending in the application.

Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 11 - 22 are indicated as allowable. Claim 2 is objected to, but as allowable if rewritten in independent form. The Applicants thank the Examiner for the indication of allowable subject matter.

Rejected Claims

Claims 1, 3 - 19, and 23 - 25 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. Section 102(e) as unpatentable over Fukumoto, U.S. Patent 6,621,065. Reconsideration of these claims in view of the following remarks is respectfully requested.

Fukumoto discloses an imaging probe that includes a ring illumination source 13 mounted on an annular frame 71. The frame 71 is attached to a lower portion of a chassis 23 in a housing 11, and a diffusing plate 74 is attached to the illumination source to provide uniform illumination from the source 13. (See column 5 lines 15 - 18)

Independent claims 1, 23, 30, and 34 each recite a ring light source that communicates with a light pipe. As discussed at page 6, lines 6 - 8 and page 8 lines 6 - 26 of the application as filed, a light pipe is a pipe that includes an "extended barrel of light transmissive material". The pipe acts as a "wave guide for visible and near visible light".

Each of the independent claims further recite the limitation that the light pipe includes a tip adapted to project an illumination pattern. The angle of the tip determines the angular range of light exiting the tip.

There are, therefore, a number of substantial differences between the device disclosed by the Fukumoto reference and the claimed invention. First, Fukumoto does not disclose a light pipe as recited in each of the rejected independent claims. Fukumoto, moreover, fails to

disclose an illumination ring that communicates with a light pipe, or with any pipe. The illumination ring disclosed by Fukumoto, moreover, does not communicate with a tip adapted to project an illumination pattern. On the contrary, Fukumoto discloses a ring of lights that communicate only with a diffuser that is intended to provide uniform illumination. Fukumoto, therefore does not disclose all of the elements of any of the rejected claims, and the Applicants respectfully request that the rejection under 35 U.S.C. Section 102(e) be withdrawn.

Conclusion

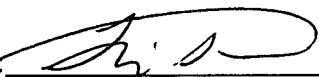
In view of the amendments, claims 1 - 35 are considered to be in condition for allowance, and a notice of allowance for these claims is respectfully requested.

A one month extension fee is due in accordance with this response, and is included herewith. The Commissioner is authorized to charge any other fees under 37 CFR § 1.17 that may be due on this application to Deposit Account 17-0055. The Commissioner is also authorized to treat this amendment and any future reply in this matter requiring a petition for an extension of time as incorporating a petition for extension of time for the appropriate length of time as provided by 37 CFR § 136(a)(3).

Respectfully submitted,

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